

BFA_2010 | Artist Statement Workshop

Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition | May 2010

Mandatory Artist Statement Workshop
Wednesday, 03 February 2010 at 12:10 p.m. in DA Media

Supplemental Information

Artist's Statement

An artist's statement can be used in a variety of ways.

As a tool to clarify issues and ideas about your artwork and its development
As additional information to include with your resume and/or portfolio
As publicity information for exhibitions, press packets, and grant applications.

An artist's statement permits you to discuss your work and yourself in a way precluded by the more formal format of a resume. It provides the reader with a more informed approach to the work. While the art should stand on its own, thoughtful, well-written information can contribute to the accessibility and understanding for the work. Writing a statement helps you to clarify your thoughts, permitting you to speak about your work in an effective, coherent manner.

As your artwork has developed, an on going process has taken place. A series of decisions— aesthetic, technical and intellectual— have played part in the evolution of the work. The artist's statement should convey some of that process to the reader and add appreciation to the viewing of your work by providing appropriate technical and factual information.

Your written statement should be given the same kind of time to develop as the artwork it is describing. Outline what you want your statement to encompass; will it be as broad as your artistic development to date, or will it be as specific as a current body of work or perhaps even a single piece. Start by writing a rough draft— just write freely, don't try to write and edit.

Put your writing away for a few days and then come back to it. Reread it and add or delete as needed. Make sure you have organized your thoughts logically. After you have your statement written, as someone unfamiliar with your work to read it to see if you have successfully communicated your ideas.

_____ Please initial, tear this section from the sheet and hand this slip to the professor upon arrival to confirm that you attended this mandatory workshop.

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Elements of a statement

- A. Why:
 - 01. Discuss your outlook, i.e., your vision, insights, or philosophy. Explain why you do what you do and what it is about.
- B. What it is:
 - 01. Medium
 - 02. Style: be specific and descriptive
- C. How:
 - 01. Technique or method.
 - 02. Relate technique and style to your medium
 - 03. Relate technique and style to your vision or philosophy

Construction of a statement

- A. Honesty:
 - 01. Avoid being pompous.
 - 02. Do not use grandiose and empty expressions, especially when discussing a philosophical point of view.
 - 03. Make it singular, not general; it should reflect you.
- B. Clarity and directness:
 - 01. Avoid being too technical or too simplified.
 - 02. Avoid the use of jargon or cliché.
- C. Length:
 - 01. One typewritten page
 - 02. Eliminate unnecessary discussions and explanations.
 - 03. Be concise and to the point.
 - 04. Correct grammar and spelling are of the utmost importance.
- D. Style:
 - 01. Try to capture your own speaking voice.
 - 02. Avoid repetition of phrases.
 - 03. Vary sentence structure and length. The length of the sentence should relate to the complexity of the idea.
 - 04. Organization of detail is important. Significant ideas should be at the end of each sentence for emphasis.

Additional Resources Online:

<http://labweb.education.wisc.edu/artcommunity/artisttips/makeartiststatement.asp>
<http://labweb.education.wisc.edu/artc>
<http://www.eciad.bc.ca/wc/artiststate2.htm>
<http://www.ceramicsmonthly.org/mustreads/artist.asp>
<http://www.cia.edu/pdf/statement.pdf>

Artist Statement Example

Words are the tools of language. They are the vehicles through which we convey the physical idea of things: objects, emotions, meanings, and concepts. To create a visual definition of word through an artistic medium is, in essence, to use something that is intangible and recreate it in a tangible form. "Platonic Love" is an idea defined as the spiritual affection between a man and a woman with the absence of sexual desire. Because I use a camera to record my images it is necessary for me to break down an idea into its physical elements. In this case the physical elements are man, woman, and absence of sex. I can't portray sexual desire (or the absence of it), as an object, but I can show sex as a physical aspect by alluding to gender.

The implications of Greek sculpture in this series are very pertinent considering that they revolve around "Platonic Love", a topic in Plato's Symposium. The physical suggestion of Greek statuary in this piece is more accurately a reference to how we view Greek sculpture today. They are old, broken, and white, rendered as objects rather than portraits of identity. I use cropping, and make-up to create a similar kind of objectified body. The red backdrop is also a significant aspect of this piece, red historically referred to the color of love. Along with the white make-up, it also points to the influence of Ancient Greek statuary in the works by referencing the museum setting in which we would usually view this type of sculpture.

This series is shot on 4x5 color negative film, and printed on 16x20 color photographic paper. The photos are meant to be shown in a horizontal row, making them easier to survey, in the way one would a police line-up or contestants in a beauty pageant. I strip away social influences on gender by removing length of hair, cosmetics, and adornment of the body. By losing these social factors, my subjects become easier to look at as physical objects materialized from a literal translation of the words that define an idea.

— Student, Memphis College of Art

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